

Sūrah Al-Ra'd

(The Thunder)

Sūrah al-Ra'd is Makki and it has 43 verses and 6 sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 4

الْمَرَّةِ تِلْكَ آيَةُ الْكِتَابِ ۖ وَالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ الْحَقُّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾ اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۖ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۖ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ ﴿٢﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْهَارًا ۖ وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ يُغْشَى اللَّيْلُ النَّهَارَ ۖ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣﴾ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ قِطْعٌ مُّتَجَوِّرٌ وَجُنُتٌ مِّنْ آعْنَابٍ وَزُرْعٌ وَنَخِيلٌ صِنْوَانٌ وَغَيْرُ صِنْوَانٍ يُسْقَىٰ بِمَاءٍ وَاحِدٍ ۖ وَنُفْضِلُ بَعْضَهَا عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ فِي الْأَكْلِ ۖ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٤﴾

Alif, Lām, Mīm, Rā. These are the verses of the Book. And what has been sent down to you from your Lord is true, but most of the people do not believe. [1]

Allah is the One who raised the heavens without pillars. You see them. Then He positioned Himself on the Throne and subjugated the sun and the moon, each one running to an appointed time. He manages all matters, making the signs plain, so that you may be sure of meeting your Lord. [2]

And He is the One who spread out the earth and made mountains and rivers therein, and of all the fruits, He created therein the pairs of two. He makes the night cover the day. Surely, in that there are signs for a people who think. [3]

And in the earth there are tracts of land neighboring each other and gardens of grapes and farms and date palms, having twin or single trunks, watered with one water. And We make some better than others in taste. Surely, in that there are signs for a people who understand. [4]

Commentary

This Sūrah is Makki and it has a total of forty three verses. Mentioned in this Sūrah too there are subjects such as the truth and veracity of the Holy Qur'ān, Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah), Risālah (Prophethood) and answers to doubts raised about them.

The first group of letters: *المر* (Alif, Lām, Mīm, Rā) are Isolated Letters (*Al-Ḥurūf al-Muqatta'āt*) the meaning of which are known to Allah Ta'ālā alone. The Ummah has not been informed of its meaning. It is not appropriate for the Muslim Ummah at large to indulge in investigations about them.

The first verse says that the Holy Qur'ān is Divine Word, and that it is true. The word, *الكتاب* (Al-Kitāb: The Book) means the Qur'ān, and it is possible that the expression which follows it, that is, *الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ* (And what has been sent down to you from your Lord) might as well mean the Qur'ān itself. But, the connective (the *wāw* of *'atf* translated as 'And') obviously requires that *الكتاب* (Al-Kitāb: The Book) and *الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ* (what has been sent down to you) should be two separate things. In that case, Al-Kitāb or The Book would signify the Qur'ān and *الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ* (what has been sent down to you) would mean the revelation (Wahy), other than that of the Qur'ān, which has been sent down to the Holy Prophet ﷺ - because, it goes without saying, that the revelation sent to

the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not restricted to the Qur'ān alone. The Qur'ān itself says: وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۚ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ (53:3) It means: Whatever the Holy Prophet says, he does not say on his own, out of some desire of his; instead, it is a message revealed to him from Allah Ta'ala. It proves that the orders given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, other than those appearing in the Qur'ān, are also no other but those sent from Allah. The only difference between the two is that the Qur'ān is recited (*matluww*) while the later is not (*ghayr matluww*). The rationale for this difference is that the meanings and the words of the Qur'ān are both from Allah Ta'ālā, while, in the case of the rules of conduct (Aḥkām) given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in Ḥadīth - in addition to those in the Qur'ān - their meanings too are, no doubt, revealed from Allah Ta'ālā, but their words are not revealed from Him. Therefore, they cannot be recited in Ṣalāh.

Thus, the verse comes to mean that the Qur'ān and its injunctions sent down to the Holy Prophet ﷺ are all true and in them there is no room for doubt. But, most people, due to their lack of concern and deliberation, do not come around to believe in them.

That Allah Ta'ālā exists and that He is One has been emphasized in the second verse. The proof stands obvious. Look at what has been created and ponder over the matchless mastery with which everything was created. One can come to only one conclusion that their maker has absolute power over everything and that He controls all creations and universes as the master. It was said:

اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا

Allah is the One who raised the heavens without pillars. You see them.

On Seeing the Sky

It is generally said that the blue colour we see up is the colour of the sky. But physicists say that we see it so because of the intermingling of light and dark. Below, there is the light from the stars, and above, it is dark. As a result, the onlooker outside sees it as blue, similar to the reflection of light on deep water which appears blue. There are verses of the Qur'ān where seeing the sky has been mentioned, as has been done in this very verse which says: تَرَوْنَهَا (You see them), and the words appearing in another verse (88:18) are: وَاللَّيْلِ السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ (And do you not see)

towards the sky as to how it has been raised - 88:18.)' First of all, the scientific determination of physicists does not stand counter to it because it is possible that the colour of the sky might as well be bluish, or may have some other colour, but it is sighted as blue due to the admixture of the dark behind and the light in between. Moreover, the possibility that the colour of the sky is a component of the atmosphere cannot be rejected as supported by valid proof. Then, it is also possible that places where 'seeing the sky' has been mentioned in the Qur'ān, the expression employed there may be legal and figurative aiming to establish that the existence of the sky stands proved under decisive arguments and is as good as seen. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

After that, it was said:

ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ

Then He positioned Himself on the Throne ...

This mode of taking over the Seat of Power is beyond human comprehension. Understanding it is impossible. Here, it is sufficient to believe that this state of *Istiwā* or positioning on the 'Arsh' or Throne is something matching with the Divine Status as due, and that is what is meant here.

In the next sentence: *وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى* (and subjugated the sun and the moon, each one running to an appointed time), the word: *سَخَّرَ* translated as 'subjugated' means that they both are constantly doing what they have been assigned to do. Thousands of years have gone by but there never has been the least increase or decrease in their movement, nor do they get tired, nor do they ever start doing something else contrary to what they have been programmed to do. As for their 'running to an appointed time,' it could also mean that both of them are moving on to the same appointed time which stands determined as the final term called *Qiyāmah* or Doomsday for this entire world of our experience. Once they reach that stage in time, this whole system of theirs will reach its end.

And it could also mean that Allah Ta'ālā has determined a particular speed and orbit for every planet. It always keeps moving on its orbit at the speed set for it. The Moon completes its orbit in one month and

the Sun does it in a year.

Certainly mind-boggling is the very presence of these great planets. Then, no less astonishing is the phenomena of their flawless functioning. Here they are moving on a particular orbit maintaining a particular speed precisely and perfectly for thousands of years in a state that their machinery faces no wear and tear or breakage, nor does it require any kind of greasing or servicing. Think of the revolutionary advancements of science in human technology in our day. Can any human invention around match this model? The truth is that it is impossible to locate even a thousandth part of it anywhere in the world despite human ingenuity being at its highest pinnacle. This great system of nature is delivering a message, very loud and very clear. It is telling us that there certainly is some Being who has made, moved and maintained this system, a Being far beyond the reach of human perception and intelligence.

In Reality, It is Allah who Makes Things Work for Human Beings while Their Role in It is Nominal

After that comes the powerful statement: يُدَبِّرُ الْأُمُورَ (He manages all matters). If man so pleased with the ways and means which help make things work for him were to open his eyes, he would realize that his plans and measures could neither create nor make things in the real sense. The outcome of all his efforts and workings is no more than getting to learn how to make the best use of what has been created by Allah Ta'ālā.

Besides, even the system of harnessing what is universally available for use is outside the ambit of power exercised by human beings. The reason is that human beings depend on hundreds and thousands of others like him, and on animals, and on many other live and inert members of Divine creation. These they cannot put on their jobs just by dint of their plans and efforts. This is the function of the Divine power. It has linked up everything, as if in a chain, and in a way that everything gets to be drawn into the desired action. You need to build a house. You find a whole range of servers from the architect to the builder and the finisher, hundreds of human beings offering their career and craft all set to answer your call. You need building materials. They lie stacked in stores and shops ready to be delivered where you want them. Was it within your power and control to assemble all these things on your own just by

the brute force of your money or measures and, on top of it, commission all those human beings into your service? Let us part with your individual example at this point. The fact is that this system cannot be established and activated through the force of law, even by the mightiest of the mighty government anywhere in the world. There is no doubt about the fact that the logistic support of this viably running universal system is the work of Allah Ta'ālā alone, the Ever-Living, the Self-Sustaining Sustainer of all (*Al-Ḥaiyy, Al-Qaiyyūm*). If human beings still hasten to claim that all this comes from their plans and workings, there is not much that can be said about their claim, for ignorance shall remain what it is.

The next sentence in the verse is: يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ (making the signs plain). It may mean the verses of the Qur'ān which have been revealed by Allah Ta'ālā in details and then, it was through the Holy Prophet ﷺ that He elaborated and explained them.

And the word, الْآيَاتِ (*al-āyāt*) could also mean the 'signs' of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā which are spread out in the heavens and the earth, even in the very existence of human beings themselves. These are before human sight all the time and everywhere, so many and so plain.

Said in the last sentence of the verse was: لَعَلَّكُمْ يَلْقَاءُ رَبَّكُمْ تَوْفَئُونَ (so that you may be sure of meeting your Lord). This means that Allah Ta'ālā has initiated and activated this whole universe and its astonishing system of operation so that by pondering over it you may come to believe in and become certain of the Hereafter (*'Ākhirah*) and the Doomsday (*Qiyāmah*). The reason is that once you have pondered over the creation of this universe and its wondrous system, any likelihood of doubting that it may be beyond the power of Allah Ta'ālā to resurrect human beings in the Hereafter simply cannot be entertained. And once we realize that it is within His power, and possible, and that it has been reported by no less a person than the one about whom it is universally settled that he never said anything in his whole life which was not the truth - then, there remains no room for doubt that this phenomena is real, actual and proven.

In the next verse (3), it was said:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْهَارًا

And He is the One who spread out the earth and made mountains and rivers therein.

The expression: 'spread out the earth' is not contradictory of its being round - because each part of something very big and round appears to be, when looked at separately, nothing but a surface spread out - and the Qur'ān addresses common people in terms of their view of things. Since a common onlooker sees it as a spread-out surface, therefore, it was identified as such. Then, to keep it balanced and make it full of other benefits, high and heavy mountains were placed on it. Besides providing weight and balance, these mountains store and supply water for the whole creation. To accomplish this, an unimaginably big storage of water is placed on their peaks in the form of a frozen sea. This snow has no reservoir and certainly needs no monolithic structures, overhead or underground, to hold this supply of water. And the water thus stored cannot go bad or made impure. Then, nature has its own pipelines under the ground through which water is distributed all over the world. Somewhere they show up in the form of rivers flowing freely along with their tributaries; and at other places, wells are dug to tap water from these hidden pipelines.

In the next sentence of verse 3, it was said: وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَيْنِ (and of all the fruits, He created therein the pairs of two). It means that Allah has created fruits of many kinds from this earth and made each one of two kinds: small and big, red, white, sweet and sour. It is also possible that the meaning of 'zawjayn' (pairs) is not restricted to only two. Instead, it may be referring to several kinds the least number of which is two, therefore, it was termed as 'the pairs of two.' And it is not so unlikely that 'pairs' refers to the male and female, as we know about many trees which have males and females, for example, the date-palm and the papayah. Possibility of this being the case with other trees as well does exist, though not yet proved by relevant research about all of them.

The next sentence of the verse declares: يُغْشِي اللَّيْلُ النَّهَارَ (He makes the night cover the day). It means that He brings the night after the light of the day, as if something bright has been totally screened off from sight.

The last sentence of the verse: **إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ** translated as 'surely, in that there are signs for a people who think,' means that there is no doubt about the fact that many signs of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā are present all over for those who care to think about and deliberate in the arrangement and system of this whole universe.

In the fourth verse it was said:

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ قِطْعٌ مُّتَجَوِّرَاتٌ وَجَنَّاتٌ مِّنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَزُرْعٌ وَنَخِيلٌ صُنُوفٌ وَغَيْرُ صُنُوفٍ
يُسْقَىٰ بِمَاءٍ وَاحِدٍ وَنُفَضِّلُ بَعْضَهَا عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ فِي الْأَكْلِ

And in the earth there are tracts of land neighboring each other and gardens of grapes and farms and date-palms, having twin or single trunks, watered with one water. And We make some better than others in taste. Surely, in that there are signs for a people who understand.

Being pointed out here is that many tracts of land, despite being joined together, are different in their inherent properties. Some are good and soft, others are saline or hard. Some are good for farming while others grow gardens, of grapes and dates. Of the date-palms, some grow to have two trunks like other trees while others have only one.

Then, all these fruits, though they come out of the same land and are watered by the same water and are touched by the rays of the sun and the glow of the moon and the draft of different winds in a uniform manner, yet there remains among them the difference of colour and taste and size.

Despite their being in such proximity with each other, the varied difference among them is a strong and clear proof of the fact that this whole system of creation is operating under the command of someone who is wise and knows how to plan, manage and run His creation. This has nothing to do with the postulates of the theory of evolution, as some ignorant people would like to believe. If these were the outcome of the stages of material development, how could we explain the element of difference among them despite all matter being common? One fruit grows on a tract of land in one season while another grows in the other. On one single branch of one tree, the fruits could be different in kinds, sizes and tastes!

Said in the last sentence of the verse (4) was: **إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ** (Surely, in that there are signs for a people who understand). It means that there are in it, absolutely without doubt, many signs of the power and greatness of Allah Ta'ālā which go on to prove that He is One and that He alone is worthy of worship. By saying that these signs are 'for a people who understand,' the hint released is that those who do not think about these things are not the people of understanding, no matter how highly they are rated and advertized for their intellect and intelligence.

Verses 5 - 8

وَأَن تَعْجَبَ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ ء إِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا إِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ؕ
 أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ ؕ وَأُولَٰئِكَ الْأَغْلُلُ فِيٓ أَعْنَاقِهِمْ ؕ وَأُولَٰئِكَ
 أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٥﴾ وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ
 الْحَسَنَةِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمُ الْمَثَلَتُ ۖ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو مَغْفِرَةٍ لِّلنَّاسِ
 عَلَى ظُلْمِهِمْ ۖ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَشَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٦﴾ وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
 لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ ؕ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ ﴿٧﴾ اللَّهُ
 يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ أُنْثَىٰ وَمَا تَغِيضُ الْأَرْحَامُ وَمَا تَزْدَادُ ۖ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ
 عِنْدَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ ﴿٨﴾

And if you wonder, then wonder is their saying, "Is it that, once we are dust, we are to be created anew?" They are those who have disbelieved in their Lord, and they are those who (shall) have shackles round their necks, and they are the people of the Fire. They shall remain there for ever. [5]

And they ask for evil to come sooner than good, while punishments have really come to pass (against people) earlier to them. And surely, your Lord is the lord of forgiveness for the people against their wrongdoing, and surely, your Lord is severe in punishing. [6]

And the disbelievers say, "Why is it that no sign has been sent down to him from his Lord?" You are but a warner.

And for every people there is a guide. [7]

Allah knows what every female carries and what the wombs decrease or increase. And everything has measure with Him: ... [8]

Commentary

Contained in the first three verses cited above (5-7) there is a refutation of the doubts expressed by the disbelievers about prophethood. Alongwith it, added there is a warning of punishment for deniers.

1. The first of the three doubts they had was about people returning to life after having been dead and according to them, the whole idea of accounting and retribution on the Day of Resurrection was improbable and irrational. On this basis, they used to belie the prophets and rejected their claim to prophethood. This doubt of theirs has been mentioned in the following verse of the Holy Qur'ān: **هَلْ نَدَّبَكُم عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ يَتَّبِعُكُم إِذَا مَرْتُمْ كُلَّ مُمَرِّقٍ** (34:7). Here, to ridicule the prophets, it has been said by the disbelievers: 'Come, we shall introduce you to a man who tells you that you, once dead, shall be shredded into pieces and the molecules of the earth you are made of shall also spread out all over the earth, then, at that time, you shall be created anew - Sabā, 34:7.'

The Proof of Rising Again After Death

The answer to this doubt of theirs has been given in the first of the present verses cited above (5) by saying: **وَأَن تَعْجَبَ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ ءِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا ءِأَنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ** Here, the address is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He is being told that he may be wondering about the attitude of the disbelievers who refuse to believe in him as a prophet of Allah despite having seen clear signs of his being a prophet, and strangely enough, at the same time, they go about believing in lifeless rocks which have neither sense nor consciousness, and who do not have the power to bring benefit to or loss on their own selves, therefore, they could hardly be expected to grant any benefit to anyone.

Certainly, far more surprising is their statement: 'Is it that, once we are dead, we shall be created anew?' The Holy Qur'ān has not spelled out the reason for this 'wonder' explicitly because, in the previous verses, by describing the wondrous manifestations of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā, it has been proved that He is the master of absolute power.

It is He who brought the entire creation from the state of non-being into the state of being. Then, He endowed into the being of everything so many varied elements of wisdom which human beings cannot even comprehend fully. From this it is obvious that the Being who can make something come into existence for the first time from total nothingness shall hardly have any difficulty in making it come into existence once again. When human beings try to make something new, they do have to remove some difficulties the first time they do it. But, when they wish to make the same thing again, things become easy.

Thus, what is really surprising is that these disbelievers do seem to believe that the Creator has created the whole universe with limitless wisdom. How then, can they consider its recreation as improbable and irrational?

Perhaps, the big problem before the deniers is what happens after death. After death, when dust returns to dust, whatever human beings are composed of gets spread out all over the earth. Winds carry them far and wide besides other causes, agents and means helping human remains get dispersed universally. Then, there will come that promised Day of Doom, the Qiyāmah. Then, they wonder, how could all that scattered dust be put together, and how, even if gathered together, can they be made to rise again (as they were)?

But, what they fail to see is that the form in which they exist at that time holds the key to their problem with comprehension. Is it not that particles from all over the world lie gathered together in them while they exist? Particles brought by water and wind from the far and near corners of the world get mingled with human intake and become part of a person's body. Most of the time the poor soul is not even aware of the fact that the morsel of food going down his or her throat comes from God knows how many areas of the world, Africa, America, or the countries of the Asian continent. Is it not that there is only One such Being who, through His wondrous wisdom and mastery of management, has made every single human being, and animal, stand to exist by assembling together scattered particles from all over the world? Now, if He can do that today, how can this become difficult for him tomorrow? Why would he not be capable of reassembling all those scattered particles back into the form they were? Specially so, when all powers of the world, the wind and

water and the rest, are subservient to Him and obey His command. If He elects to beckon the wind, the water and the atmosphere to come forth and deposit all particles they contain, would they not but obey? Why would this be any problem and why would its impossibility bother anyone?

The truth of the matter is that the disbelievers have simply failed to recognize the power of Allah Ta'ālā. They think of His Power on the analogy of their own power - though everything in the heavens and the earth and in what lies in between them does possess a comprehension and consciousness of their relative status in the scheme of the Divine arrangement of things, and they pointedly move under Divine command.

In short, what is a matter of surprise is the refusal of the disbelievers to believe in the truth of prophethood. And what is still more surprising is their refusal to believe in rising again on the day of Judgement and in having to stand to account for their deeds on that day!

After that, mention has been made of the punishment of hostile deniers of the truth. It has been said that these people not simply that they refuse to accept a prophet of Allah as such; rather what they do in reality is that they deny the very existence of their Lord. Their punishment will be that shackles will be placed round their necks and they shall live in Hell for ever.

2. The second doubt expressed by the deniers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was: 'If you are, in reality, the prophet and messenger of Allah, then, the warnings of punishments you announce against the opponents of prophets should materialize - why is it that this punishment would not come? The answer given appears in the next verse in the following words:

يَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمُ الْمَثَلُ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو مَغْفِرَةٍ
لِّلنَّاسِ عَلَى ظُلْمِهِمْ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَشَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

'And they ask for evil to come sooner than good (by saying: If you are a prophet, let us have your promised punishment now - which shows that they take the coming of the Divine punishment as something very far-removed or virtually impossible) although punishments have really come to pass against people earlier to them, (which have been witnessed by others.)

Now, if the punishment is to come to them, why should it be taken as so-

something far out, or impossible? Here, the word: المثلّة (*al-mathulāt*) is the plural form of مثلة (*mathula*) and it means a punishment which puts a person in disgrace before everyone and proves to be a lesson for all others.

After that it was said that there is no doubt that your Lord is, despite the sinning and disobeying of people, the Lord of forgiveness and mercy as well. And for people who do not take advantage of this forgiveness and mercy and elect to stick to their disobedience and contumacy, then, for them He is 'severe in punishing' as well. Therefore, they should not misunderstand the attributes of Allah's forgiveness and mercy and reach the conclusion that punishment simply cannot come to them.

3. The third doubt of the disbelievers was: As for the miracles of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they had seen many of them. But, why would he not show the specific miracles demanded by them? This has been answered in the third verse (7) by saying: وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنْذِرٌ (that is, in order to raise an objection against the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ, they say) 'Why has the specific miracle they demand has not been shown by him?' The answer is clear. The showing of a miracle is not within the control of a prophet or messenger. Instead, that is directly an act of God. It is He who elects to show a miracle, of whatever kind, at any time, and in His wisdom - all as determined by Him alone. He is not restricted by or burdened with anyone's demand or desire. Therefore, it was said: إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنْذِرٌ (You are but a warner), that is, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is there only to warn disbelievers against Divine punishment - showing miracles is not his mission.

Said in the last sentence of the verse was: وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ It means that there have been guides for every people among past communities. You are not the lone prophet. The standard mission of all prophets was to guide their people, warn them of the punishment of Allah, but none of them were given the power and control to show miracles. It is Allah who shows miracles of His choice whenever He chooses to do so.

Is it Necessary that a Prophet appears among every People and in every Country?

The statement: 'And for every people there is a guide' proves that no people and no region can remain unvisited by those who call towards Allah Ta'ālā and guide people to the straight path. It may be some proph-

et himself, or could be someone propagating the call of his deputy - as it appears in Sūrah Yā Sīn where the initial sending of two persons as deputies to the prophet of the time to a certain people has been mentioned. Sent to carry the call and give guidance, these two persons were prophets in their own right. Then, also mentioned there is the sending of a third person to help and support them in their mission.

Therefore, this verse does not make it necessary that some prophet or messenger of Allah has also appeared in India. However, it stands proved that learned people who carried the call of the prophet and told people about his teachings came to this part of the world as well. Then, it is already common knowledge that many such 'guides' have also appeared here.

Upto this point, in the first three verses cited above, there was the answer of the doubts expressed by the deniers of prophethood. In the fourth verse (8), we see a return to the principal theme of Tauḥīd (The Oneness of Allah) which started appearing since the beginning of the Sūrah. Here, it was said: **اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ أُنْثَىٰ وَمَا تَغِيصُ الْأَرْحَامُ وَمَا تَزْدَادُ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ** It means that Allah Ta'ālā knows everything about what every woman carries in her womb - a boy or girl, beautiful or otherwise, good or evil - and about why wombs of women decrease or increase, that is, about the time of delivery, whether early, in due time, or late.

Stated in this verse is a particular attribute of Allah Ta'ālā: That He is the Knower of the Unseen (*Ālim al-Ghayb*). He is aware of the minutest of this entire universe and that of everything created in it, and He is most comprehensively informed of all changing conditions of each such particle. Mentioned alongwith it is the fact of all-inclusive and most perfect knowledge of every stage, every change, and every trait in the complex process of human procreation. For instance, it is He alone who has the ultimate knowledge - the most sound, the most certain - of female pregnancy - a boy or girl? Or, both? Or, nothing but the accumulation of clusters of water or gas? Whatever opinion a physician gives in this matter as based on clinical indicators and educated guess cannot be taken to be any more than strong likelihood or estimate. There are times when things turn out to be otherwise. Even Xrays and more modern Imaging techniques fail to unravel the reality of this phenomena as due. We can only say that its real and certain knowledge can be credited only to Allah

Ta'ālā. This is what has been stated in another verse of the Qur'ān which says: وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ (And He knows whatever there is in wombs - Luqmān, 31:34).

The word: تَنْغِيضُ (*taghīḍu* : decrease) is used in the sense of becoming less or dried up. In the present verse, set against the word: تَزْدَادُ (*tazdād* : increase), it becomes clear that, at this place, it means decrease. Thus, it means that the most correct and sound knowledge of 'what the wombs decrease or increase' rests with none but Allah Ta'ālā. This 'increase' and 'decrease' could be referring to the increase or decrease in the number of children to be born, that is, whether the womb contains only one child, or has more than one. It is also possible that it may be denoting the increase or decrease in the period of actual delivery of the child, that is, in how many months, days, and hours, this pregnancy will translate into the outward physical existence of a human being. This too is something the absolutely certain knowledge of which cannot be claimed by anyone other than Allah Ta'ālā.

Tafsīr authority Mujāhid has said that the blood excreted by a woman in pregnancy becomes the cause of decrease in the size and health of the fetus. The Qur'ānic expression: تَنْغِيضُ الْأَرْحَامِ ('the wombs decrease') means this decrease - and the truth of the matter is that the words of the verse cover decreases of all kinds, therefore, no contradiction exists here.

Said in the last sentence of verse 8 is: كُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِقَدَرٍ (And everything has measure with Him). It means that there can be no decrease or increase from the norm set with Allah Ta'ālā. All states through which a child-to-be-born passes are also included under this statement, that is, everything pertaining to such a child lies determined with Allah who knows for how many days the child will stay in the womb, then, for how long it will continue to live in the world, and how much of sustenance it will receive. This matchless knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā is an open proof of His Oneness (*Tauḥīd*).

Verses 9 - 15

عَلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيرِ الْمُتَعَالِ ﴿٩﴾ سَوَاءٌ مِنْكُمْ مَنْ أَسْرَ

الْقَوْلَ وَمَنْ جَهَرَ بِهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ مُسْتَخَفٌّ بِاللَّيْلِ وَسَارِبٌ بِالنَّهَارِ ﴿١٠﴾
 لَهُ مُعَقِّبَاتٌ مِّنْ أَيْمَنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ، مِّنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
 لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءَ
 ۞ فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ ۚ وَمَا لَهُم مِّنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَالٍ ۚ ﴿١١﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي يُرِيكُمُ
 الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَيُنشِئُ السَّحَابَ الثِّقَالَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ
 بِحَمْدِهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ مِنْ خِيفَتِهِ ۚ وَيُرْسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ فَيُصِيبُ بِهَا مَن
 يَشَاءُ وَهُمْ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي اللَّهِ ۚ وَهُوَ شَدِيدُ الْمِحَالِ ﴿١٣﴾ لَهُ دَعْوَةُ
 الْحَقِّ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُونَ لَهُمْ بِشَيْءٍ إِلَّا
 كَبَاسِطٍ كَفِيهِ إِلَى الْمَاءِ لِيَبْلُغَ فَاهُ وَمَا هُوَ بِبَالِغِهِ ۚ وَمَادَّعَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ
 إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ ۚ ﴿١٤﴾ وَلِلَّهِ يَسْجُدُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا
 وَكَرْهًا وَظِلُّهُمْ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ ۚ ﴿١٥﴾

- the Knower of the hidden and the manifest, the Great, the High. [9]

Alike (for Him) is he, from among you, who speaks quietly and he who speaks aloud, and he who hides in the night and he who walks out in the day. [10]

For him there are angels replacing each other, before him and behind him, who guard him under the command of Allah. Surely, Allah does not change what is in a people until they change what is in themselves. And when Allah intends evil for a people, there is no way to turn it back, and for them there is no patron other than Him. [11]

He is the One who makes you see the lightening in fear and hope and forms the heavy clouds. [12] And the thunder proclaims His purity with His praise, and (so do) the angels, out of His awe. and He sends the thunderbolts and strikes with it whom He wills. And they are quarrelling about Allah, and He is stern in His plan. [13]

For Him is the prayer in truth. And those who pray to

others than Him are not responded to by them at all, but they are like one who stretches his hands towards water so that it may reach his mouth (by itself), while it is not to reach it. And the prayer of the disbelievers does not but go astray. [14]

And to Allah bow in prostration all who are in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and their shadows as well in morns and eves. [15]

Commentary

The theme of the exclusive attributes of the perfection of Allah Ta'ālā continues. Starting earlier than the verses cited above, this theme is actually an array of proofs concerning the Oneness of Allah. Onwards from the previous verse (9), it was said in the first verse (10) here: عَلِمَ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيرُ الْمُتَعَالِ (- the Knower of the hidden and the manifest, the Great, the High). The word: الْغَيْبِ (*al-ghayb* : the hidden, the unseen) means that which is absent from the reach of human senses, that is, which cannot be seen with eyes, nor heard with ears, nor smelt with the nose, nor tasted with the tongue, nor sensed by touching with hands.

As for: الشَّهَادَةِ (*ash-shahādah* : manifest, present), it stands in contrast to '*al-ghayb*' or the hidden and denotes what can be found out by using human senses mentioned above. The verse means that it is the very exclusive attribute of Allah Ta'ālā that He knows everything hidden (*al-ghayb*) precisely as He knows the manifest, present and existing.

The word: الْكَبِيرُ (*al-kabīr*) means the great and الْمُتَعَالِ (*al-muta'āl*) means the high, above. The sense conveyed by these two words is that He is great and far above the attributes of what He has created. Though the disbelievers and polytheists did confess to the great and exalted state of the Being of Allah Ta'ālā, in a general way, but were obviously misguided by a lack of proper perception when they took Allah Ta'ālā on the analogy of common human beings and went on to associate such attributes to him as were far too removed from His great majesty. For instance, the Jews and the Christians attributed a son for Allah, while others suggested for Allah a body and its parts just like those of human beings, and still others tried to prove direction and orientation for Him. But, the fact is that Allah is far above, absolutely pure and free of all such conditions and attributions. It should be kept in mind that, in order to emphasize His absolvment from all such human attributions, He has

repeatedly reminded us in the Qur'ān: سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ that is, 'Allah is pure and free from what these people attribute to Him.' (21:22; 23:91; 37:159; 37:180)

The perfection of the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā was described in عَلِيمُ (the Knower of the hidden and the manifest) appearing in the first sentence (9) as well as in اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ أُنْثَى (Allah knows what every woman carries) in the verse previous to it (8). Mentioned in the second sentence here: الْكَبِيرُ الْمُتَعَالِ (the great, the high) is the power and greatness of Allah for His power and reach is far beyond any human calculation. Also in the verse which follows, the same perfection in knowledge and power has been pointed to in a particular manner. There it has been said:

سَوَاءٌ مِنْكُمْ مَنْ أَسْرَأَ الْقَوْلَ وَمَنْ جَهَرَ بِهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ مُسْتَخْفٍ بِاللَّيْلِ وَسَارِبٌ بِالنَّهَارِ

Alike [for Him] is he, from among you, who speaks quietly and he who speaks aloud, and he who hides in the night and he who walks out in the day - 10.

The expression: أَسْرَأَ الْقَوْلَ (speaks quietly) is a derivation from: أَسْرَارَ (as-rār) which means secret talk and: جَهَرَ (jahr) means open talk. When one talks to be heard by others, it is called *jahr* and what one says for his own hearing is called *sirr*. The word: مُسْتَخْفٍ (mustakhfin) refers to one who hides, and: سَارِبٍ (sārib) means one who walks his way freely.

The verse means that, because of the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā, the one who talks quietly or secretly and the one who talks loudly and openly are both equal in His sight. He hears and knows what they say, identically and uniformly. Similarly, there is the person hiding in the darkness of the night and there is another walking freely in open daylight. Both of them are alike in terms of His knowledge and power, since He knows all inward and outward conditions of both alike and His power surrounds them both alike and just no one is outside His power and control. An elaboration of this point appears in the next verse in the following words:

لَهُ مُعَقِّبَاتٌ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ

For him there are angels replacing each other, before him and behind him, who guard him under the command of Allah - 11.

The word: مُعَقِّبَاتٍ (mu'aqqibāt) is the plural form of *mu'aqqibah*. A

group which comes concurrently behind another group is called *mu'aqqibah* or *muta'aqqibah* (hence, the translation: 'replacing each other'). The expression: مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ (*min bayni yadayhi*) literally means in between the two hands. It denotes the direction in front of a person. And: وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ (*wa min khalfihī*) means 'behind him.' The particle: مِنْ (*min*) in the statement: مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ (*min amrillāh*) has been placed here to serve as the *bā'* (باء) of causation. It has been used here in the sense of: بِأَمْرِ اللَّهِ (*bi amrillāh*: under the command of Allah). In some readings (*Qir'āat*) of the Qur'an, this word has also been reported as: بِأَمْرِ اللَّهِ (*bi amrillāh*). (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The verse means that for all human beings - whether one conceals what one says, or discloses it; or, similarly, one wishes to hide one's movement under the dark cover of the night, or goes about walking freely and openly in broad daylight - there are groups of angels appointed from Allah who provide a security cordon for them from in front of them and from behind them. Their hours of service and duty keep changing, so they keep replacing each other one after the other. The assignment given to them under the command of Allah is that they should protect human beings.

According to a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī, there are two groups of angels who have been appointed to guard human beings, one for the day, and another for the night. These groups meet together during the prayers of Fajr and 'Aṣr. The night guards depart after the Ṣalāh of Fajr and the daytime guards take over. Then, they leave after the Ṣalāh of 'Aṣr and the night guards resume their duty.

As reported by Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رحمته الله in a Ḥadīth of Abū Dāwūd, for every human being there are guardian angels appointed to protect him or her. It is their duty to keep guarding them lest a wall or something else falls over them, or they stumble into a ditch or cave, or some animal or man causes hurt or harm to them. However, when the will of Allah itself stands enforced against a person condemned to suffer from some hardship or calamity, the guarding angels move away from the site. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

From a narration of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī رحمته الله as in a Ḥadīth of Ibn Jarīr, we know that the duty of these guarding angels is not limited to protecting human beings from worldly discomforts and hardships

only, instead, they also try to dissuade them from sins and do their best to keep them safe. They would go on infusing in their hearts the urge to do good and fear Allah, so that, through these, they would stay away from sinning. Now, if they still fall into sin by becoming neglectful of the angelic inspiration, they nevertheless pray for him and try that the sinner would somehow hasten to repent and become cleansed of the sin. After that, if the sinner fails to take any warning and refuses to correct himself, then, they write down a sin in his Book of Deeds.

In short, these guarding angels keep protecting human beings against the unwelcome happenings of both the present world and the world to come, all the time, awake or asleep. The well-known Ṭabī'ī, Ka'b Al-Aḥbār رحمه الله تعالى says: Should this protective Divine cordon be removed from around human beings, the Jinns would make their lives difficult. But, all these protective arrangements work only until such time as the Divine decree permits them to remain operative. Now, if Allah Ta'ālā Himself wills to let a servant of His suffer, this arrangement of protection stands dismissed.

This has been elaborated in the next verse in the following manner:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ
وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَّالٍ

Surely, Allah does not change what is in a people until they change what is in themselves. And when Allah intends evil for a people, there is no way to turn it back, and for them there is no patron other than Him - 11.

It means that Allah Ta'ālā does not change the state of peace and security enjoyed by a people into a state of distress and instability until such time that those people themselves change their deeds and ways into evil and disorder. And when a whole people change to commit themselves and their surrounding conditions into rank contumacy and disobedience, then, Allah Ta'ālā too changes His way with them. And it is obvious that, should Allah Ta'ālā Himself intend evil and punishment for anyone, then, there is no way that could be averted and there is no one who can rise to help them out against the Divine decree.

The outcome is that human beings remain actively protected by angels under the command of Allah Ta'ālā, but should a people become un-

grateful for His blessings and forsake being obedient to him only to take to evil doings and become contumacious in the end, then, the posse of protection posted by Allah Ta'ālā is called off duty. At that time, the wrath and punishment of Allah Ta'ālā descends upon them and there remains no way they could escape from these.

This explanation tells us that the 'change' referred to in the cited verse means: When a people abandon gratitude and obedience and settle for a change to worse around them, then, Allah Ta'ālā too brings about a change in His way of mercy and protection.

According to a common explanation of this verse, no positive revolution appears among a people unless they themselves do not correct conditions around them to bring about that positive revolution. There is a very popular Urdu couplet by poet Hālī which carries this very sense:

خدا نے آج تک اس قوم کی حالت نہیں بدلی
نہ ہو جسکو خیال آپ اپنی حالت کے بدلنے کا

To this day, God has never changed the condition of a people
Who have no plan of changing their condition themselves.

What has been said here is, no doubt, correct to a certain extent. But, this is not the sense of the Verse cited here. And its being correct too has to be viewed in terms of a general principle, that is, for a person who has no intention of correcting himself, there is no promise of help and support from Allah Ta'ālā. Instead, this promise is valid under the condition that someone would himself think and do something about it - as we learn from the noble verse: وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا (that is, 'those who strive in Us, them We do lead to Our paths - (29:69)' which tells us that the pathways of guidance from Allah Ta'ālā too open up only when the urge to have such guidance is present there. But, Divine blessings are not bound by this restriction. They would, at times, come even without it.

Take our own existence and its countless blessings. These are not the outcome of our effort, nor had we ever prayed that we be given such a presence with eyes, nose, ears and rest of the most perfect body. These are wonderful blessings - and we have them without having to ask for

them. However, the right to deserve blessings and to become worthy recipients of the fruits of the Divine promise cannot be received without making one's own effort to earn it - and should a people keep waiting for Divine rewards without putting in the due effort and deed, it would amount to nothing but self-deception.

After that, it was said in verse 12: هُوَ الَّذِي يُرِيكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَيُنْشِئُ السَّحَابَ الثِّقَالَ It means that it is Allah Ta'ālā Who makes you see the lightening and the thunder which can become a matter of fear for human beings lest it may destroy what it strikes. Then, it has a dimension of hope too by raising expectations that rains may follow the thunder, rains which support animal and human lives. And then, He is the One who lifts heavy and huge clouds up from the surface of the sea as the monsoons and carries these water-laden clouds post-haste through the atmosphere to places near and far off and has them deliver their rains over lands He chooses in accordance with His decree and corresponding to the measure determined by Him.

In the next verse (13), it was said: وَيَسْبِيحُ الرَّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ مِنْ حِيفَتِهِ (And the thunder proclaims His purity with His praise, and [so do] the angels, out of His awe). In Arabic usage, the word: الرَّعْدُ (Ar-Ra'd) refers to the sound of the clouds generated by their collision. The sense of تَسْبِيحٌ (Tasbīḥ: the glorification of Allah) mentioned here is that of the same Tasbīḥ about which it has been said in another verse of the Qur'an: وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا 'وَيُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ' And there is nothing in the heavens and the earth which does not glorify Allah, but they do not understand their glorification' - (17:44).

And it appears in some narrations of Ḥadīth that Ar-Ra'd is the name of the angel appointed to bring rains. In terms of this sense, the reciting of Tasbīḥ is obvious.

Said in the next sentence 12 is: وَيُرْسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ فَيُصِيبُ بِهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ (And He sends the thunderbolts and strikes with it whom He wills). The word: الصَّوَاعِقُ (aṣ-ṣawā'iq) is the plural form of aṣ-ṣā'iqah which is the name of the thunderbolt that strikes the earth. The sense of the verse is that it is Allah who sends these thunderbolts down upon the earth and, with these, He strikes whom He wills.

The last sentence of this verse is: وَهُمْ يُحَادِّثُونَ فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ شَدِيدُ الْمِحَالِ (And

they are quarrelling about Allah, and He is stern in His plan). The word: *المِحَال* (*al-miḥāl*: with Kasrah on the initial letter *Mīm*) has been used here in the triple sense of stratagem and plan, and retribution and punishment, and in the sense of power as well. The verse means that (it is in the background of what has been stated above) that these people are busy with debates and altercations about the truth of Allah's Oneness - despite the fact that Allah Ta'ālā has the ultimate power whose plan overtakes all and nothing works against it.

Verses 16 - 17

قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ قُلِ اللَّهُ ۖ قُلْ أَفَاتَّخَذْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ
 أَوْلِيَاءَ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ أَنْفُسِهِمْ نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا ۚ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَى
 وَالْبَصِيرُ ۗ أَمْ هَلْ تَسْتَوِي الظُّلُمَةُ وَالنُّورُ ۗ أَمْ جَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ
 خَلَقُوا كَخَلْقِهِ فَتَشَابَهَ الْخَلْقُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ قُلِ اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
 وَهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿١٦﴾ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ
 بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا ۚ وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ
 ابْتِغَاءَ حِلْيَةٍ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلَهُ ۖ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ ۗ
 فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً ۖ وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ
 كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ ﴿١٧﴾

Say, "Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?" Say, "Allah." Say, "Have you, then, taken others than Him as protectors who possess no power to cause benefit or harm even to themselves?" Say, "Is it that a blind person and a sighted one are equal, or that (all sorts of) the darkness and the light are alike?" Or, have they made partners with Allah who created as He created, and thus the creation seemed to them alike? Say, "Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the All-Dominant." [16]

He sent down water from the heavens, so the *wādīs* flowed according to their measure, and the flood carried bulging foam. And a similar foam comes up from

what they melt in fire to obtain ornaments or other objects. This is how Allah depicts the truth and the untruth. As for the foam, it gets to be thrown away, while that which benefits people remains on the earth. This is how Allah brings out the parables. [17]

Commentary

The outcome of both parables is that foam does appear prominent for a while on the real thing, but it finally gets to be thrown away and the real thing remains. Similar is the case of the false. Though the false may, for a short while, appear to have overcome the true, but the false is finally subdued and eliminated and that which is true remains and stands manifestly proven. (Tafsīr Al-Jalālayn)

Verses 18 - 24

لِّلَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمُ الْحُسْنَىٰ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُ لَوْ أَنَّ
لَهُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهِ ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ
الْحِسَابِ ۚ وَمَأْوَاهُمُ جَهَنَّمُ ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٨﴾ أَفَمَنْ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّمَا
أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ الْحَقُّ كَمَنْ هُوَ أَعْمَىٰ ۖ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولَٰؤِ
الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩﴾ الَّذِينَ يُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَنْقُضُونَ الْمِيثَاقَ ﴿٢٠﴾
وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُونَ
سُوءَ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٢١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا
الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوْا زَكَاةً سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً وَيَدْرَءُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ
السَّيِّئَةَ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٢٢﴾ جَنَّتٌ عَدْنٌ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمَنْ
صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّتِهِمْ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ
كُلِّ بَابٍ ﴿٢٣﴾ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٢٤﴾

For those who obey their Lord there is the best of re-
wards. And those who do not obey Him (shall be in a
plight that) even if they possess all that is on earth, rath-
er twice as much, they would offer it in ransom. For

these there is the worst of reckoning. And their abode is the Hell, and it is an evil bed. [18]

Now, is the one who knows that whatever has been revealed to you from your Lord is the truth, equal to one who is blind? Only the people of understanding respond to the advice --- [19] those who fulfill (their) pledge with Allah and do not break the covenant, [20] and those who maintain the relations Allah has commanded to be maintained and fear their Lord and are frightful of evil reckoning, [21] and those who observe patience in order to seek the pleasure of their Lord and establish Ṣalāh and spend from what We have given to them secretly and openly, and repel evil with good. Those are the ones for whom there is the ultimate abode, [22] the eternal gardens they enter, and the righteous of their fathers, spouses, and progeny as well. And the angels shall enter onto them from every gate [23] (saying) "Peace on you for the patience you observed. So, good is the ultimate abode." [24]

Commentary

Truth and Falsehood were explained through parables in verses appearing previous to those cited above. Now, in the present verses, there is a description of the distinguishing marks and attributes of the people of Truth and the people of Falsehood, alongwith a description of their good and bad deeds, and their reward and punishment.

The first verse (18) carries a description of the good return reserved for those who obey Divine injunctions and act in accordance with them, and conversely, of the severe punishment for those who disobey them and act negatively.

In the second verse (19), the two groups have been identified as the sighted and the blind through a parable and, at the end, it was said: **إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ** that is, 'only the people of understanding respond to the advice.' It means what has been exemplified here is, though, fairly clear and obvious, yet it can only be understood and appreciated by those who have their essential reason intact with them. Those who have their faculty of reason all impaired by heedlessness and disobedience cannot understand a difference so great.

From the third verse (20) begins a description of particular deeds and

marks which distinguish the two groups. Taken up first are the attributes of those who believe in and obey Divine injunctions. The initial attribute mentioned is: **الَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ** (those who fulfill [their] pledge with Allah). It covers all promises and pledges taken by Allah Ta'ālā from His servants, the very first of which was the Divine Covenant taken in eternity before an assembly of all spirits, that is: **أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ** (Am I not your Lord?) in answer to which, everyone had unanimously said: **بَلَى** (Yes, why not? Surely, You are our Lord). Similarly, the different pledges taken by Allah Ta'ālā regarding the obedience of Divine injunctions, fulfillment of assigned duties, abstinence from things impermissible as ordered by Allah have been mentioned in different verses of the Qur'ān.

The second attribute mentioned here is: **وَلَا يَنْفُضُونَ الْمِيثَاقَ** (and they do not break the covenant). It includes all covenants, including pledges between Allah and His servants which have been pointed out right here in the first sentence as: **عَهْدَ اللَّهِ** (their pledges with Allah). Also included here are the pledges given by the people of a religious community to their prophet or messenger, as well as the contracts and pacts which one human being enters into with the other.

Based on a narration by Sayyidnā 'Awf ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه, Abū Dāwūd has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ took a pledge (*'Ahd and Bay'ah*) from the noble Ṣaḥābah that they would not associate anyone with Allah, and perform Ṣalāh punctually five times every day, and obey their authorities, and would never stretch their hands for anything before any human being.

People who were parties to this solemn pledge were so true to their word of honour that, should they happen to drop their whip from their hand while riding, they would never ask anyone to pick up and hand over that whip to them. Instead of that, they would get down from their mount and pick it up themselves.

That the noble Ṣaḥābah did so was the result of the great feeling of love and the passionate desire to obey their master in their hearts. Otherwise, it was fairly obvious that he had never intended to stop them from making a request of this nature. This is very much like what happened when Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه was entering the Masjid on a certain occasion. He saw that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was addressing a

gathering. It was only by chance that, at the time he was entering the Masjid, the words: 'Sit down' happened to have been uttered by the Holy Prophet ﷺ as part of his address. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ knew that this never meant that anyone, no matter where, should sit down on the street, passage way, or a spot not suitable for the purpose. But, such was his passion for obedience that it did not allow him to take even one step forward from outside the Masjid gate where he was. Just as these words of his master struck his ears, he sat down right there.

The third attribute of the obedient servants of Allah Ta'ālā stated here is: *وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ* (and those who maintain the relations Allah has commanded to be maintained). According to the well-known explanation of this verse, it means that these people maintain relationships and keep doing what needs to be done in this matter as commanded by Allah Ta'ālā. Some commentators have explained it by saying that these people conjoin righteous deeds with faith, or synchronize their initial faith in the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Qur'ān with faith in past prophets and their books.

The fourth attribute has been identified as: *وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ* (and fear their Lord). The use of the word: *خَشْيَه* (*khashyah*) rather than *خَوْف* (*khawf*) indicates that their 'fear' of Allah is not the kind of fear one naturally has when facing some beast or dangerous man. Instead of that, this fear is like the habitual fear children have of their parents, and students of their teacher, for that is no fear of being harmed or hurt by them. Instead, such fear is grounded in love and esteem because of which one apprehends lest something said or done may become displeasing and repugnant in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, whenever the fear of Allah finds mention in an occasion of praise and glorification, generally the word used there is *Khashyah* because *Khashyah* is the name of the fear which emerges out of love and esteem. Therefore, in the next sentence, where the fear of strict reckoning has been mentioned, the word used is not *Khashyah*, instead the word used there is fear as such. It was said: *وَيَخَافُونَ سُوءَ الْحِسَابِ* (and they are frightful of evil reckoning). 'Evil reckoning' denotes reckoning which is strict and minute. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها has said: It is Divine Mercy alone which can bring salvation for human beings when things are forgone and forgiven summarily at the time the reckoning of deeds takes place. Otherwise, anyone who is made

to account for everything said and done, cannot escape from punishment. It is virtually impossible because who is there to claim that he or she has never made a mistake or committed a sin? So, this fear of having to face strict reckoning of deeds is the fifth attribute of righteous and obedient people.

The sixth attribute has been stated as: وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ (and those who observe patience in order to seek the pleasure of their Lord).

The meaning of: صَبْرٌ (*Ṣabr*) in the Arabic language is fairly general as compared with the sense which has become popular in the Urdu language (in which this Commentary was originally written). There it means to be patient under distress. (Regretfully, the common counterpart, patience, used for '*Ṣabr*' in English is also not free of its limitations, and does not carry the full and rich sense of the original Arabic). The reason is that the real meaning of *Ṣabr* is that one does not become upset under the stress of what is temperamentally unpalatable and, in fact, keeps doing what must be done resolutely and steadfastly. Therefore, it is divided into two kinds. One of them is Perseverance with Obedience (صَبْرٌ عَلَى الطَّاعَةِ), that is, being steadfast while observing and implementing the injunctions of Allah Ta'ālā. The other kind is Perseverance against Disobedience and Sin (صَبْرٌ عَنِ الْمَعْصِيَةِ), that is, being steadfast in refraining from and staying safe against sins.

The restriction of: ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ (in order to seek the pleasure of their Lord) tells us that *Ṣabr* or patience, in its general sense, is no matter of merit by itself because there comes a time when even the most impatient person somehow gets to become reconciled with his or her lot after all. So, *Ṣabr* or patience which is not willful has no worth or merit, nor does Allah Ta'ālā ever obligate anyone with something which is beyond his control. Therefore, in Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: الصَّبْرُ عِنْدَ الصَّدْمَةِ الْأُولَى, that is, 'the real and trustworthy *Ṣabr* is none but the one which is taken to immediately at the initial stage of shock. Otherwise, later on, sooner or later, one is left with no choice but to become reconciled and patient. As against this, the *Ṣabr* which is worthy of all praise is the *Ṣabr* under which one elects, by choice, to tolerate and be patient about what is contrary to his or her liking - whether it is the fulfillment of what one is obligated with, or is the abstinence from what is unlawful or reprehensible.

Therefore, if someone entered the house of somebody else with the intention of theft, but did not find the opportunity to do so, thus, having been left with no other choice but to observe patience, he returned back. Now, this Ṣabr or patience, non-voluntary as it is, is no act deserving praise or reward. It brings Thawāb or reward only when one abstains from sin because of the fear of Allah and the desire to seek His pleasure.

The seventh attribute is: أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ (establish Ṣalāh). The Qur'ānic expression for 'establish Ṣalāh' means to perform Ṣalāh with all its attending conditions and rules of etiquette and the essential humbleness of heart. It is not just the 'saying' of prayers as a matter of routine. Therefore, speaking generally, the command to perform, offer, or make prayers appearing in the Holy Qur'ān has been given with the specific word: Iqāmah, usually rendered as 'establish' in English, though still wanting.

The eighth attribute is: وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً (and spend from what We have given to them secretly and openly). The hint given here is that the amount of Zakāh prescribed by Allah Ta'ālā is not something He is asking of you, in fact, what He is asking for is a certain portion of what He has given to you, and that too is limited to the insignificant measure of 2½ percent. Naturally, giving this much should naturally be no cause of reluctance for you.

The adverb of: سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً (secretly and openly) with the command to spend wealth in the way of Allah tells us that concealment is not always the only Sunnah method in charities - instead, on occasions, doing it openly is also correct and sound. Therefore, religious scholars have said that the giving of obligatory Zakāh and charities openly is better and more merit-worthy. Doing it secretly is not appropriate so that other people could be persuaded and prompted to do the same. However, the giving of voluntary charities (Ṣadaqāt) secretly is certainly better and more merit-worthy. Aḥādīth in which giving secretly has been commended are concerned with such optional and voluntary charities.

The ninth attributes stated here is: يَذَرُوهَا بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةِ (and repel evil with good). The sense is that these people repel evil with good, enmity with friendship and injustice with forgiveness, and do not retaliate by doing what is evil in return for evil done. Some commentators have explained the meaning by saying that these people repel sin by acting righ-

teously, that is, if some sin gets to be committed by them, they follow it up by repentance, obedience and worship so punctually and abundantly that the past sin is obliterated. According to Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ advised Sayyidnā Mu'adh رضي الله عنه: If, after evil, you do good, it will obliterate evil. It means that should a person reflect, feel ashamed of having committed a sin, repent and make amends by following it up with a good deed, then, this good deed will wash off his or her past sin. Just going ahead and doing something good without first having felt ashamed and having repented after the commitment of sin is not sufficient for the forgiveness of that sin.

After having recounted these nine attributes of the obedient servants of Allah Ta'ālā, the reward promised for them is: *أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الدَّارُ* (Those are the ones for whom there is the ultimate abode). The word: *الدَّارُ* (*ad-dār*: abode, home) refers to the abode of the 'Ākhirah or Hereafter, that it, the prosperity and success of the 'Ākhirah is for them. Some commentators have said that 'abode' at this place means the abode of the mortal world the sense of which is that good people, though they have to face hardships too in this mortal world, but, finally, they are the ones who succeed in this mortal world as well.

Onwards from this point there comes the description of the same 'ultimate abode' when it is said that these shall be eternal gardens they shall enter. The word: *عَدْنٌ* (*Adn*) means to abide, settle down permanently. The sense is that no one shall ever be expelled from these gardens, instead, they shall be there eternally. Some commentators have said that 'Adn is the name of the midmost of the Paradise which is also the most superior of its many stations.

After that, mentioned there is yet another reward for these people and this reward shall not remain restricted to those people in person. In fact, even their fathers, wives and children shall get their share in it - subject to the condition that they be good in deeds, the lowest degree of which is that they be Muslims. It means that the personal conduct of their fathers and wives was, though not good enough to have enabled them to arrive at this level of success, yet it would be because of the consideration and *barakah* of the accepted servants of Allah that they too shall be admitted to that high station.

After that, the text states the additional honour they shall have in their 'ultimate abode' of the Hereafter when the angels emerge from each of its doors greeting them with Salām and telling them that their Ṣabr brings to them eternal security from all hardships and that they can themselves see how good is the ultimate abode of the 'Ākhirah.

Verses 25 - 30

وَالَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ لَا أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ ﴿٢٥﴾ اللَّهُ يَسْطُرُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ۚ وَفَرَحُوا بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا مَتَاعٌ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۚ قُلْ إِنْ اللَّهُ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي ۖ إِلَيْهِ مَنْ أَنَابَ ﴿٢٧﴾ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ ﴿٢٨﴾ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ طُوبَىٰ لَهُمْ وَحَسُنَ مَا بَدَّيْنَاكَ فِي أُمَّةٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا أُمَمٌ لَبَّتُوا عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّكْرَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ بِالرَّحْمَنِ ۚ قُلْ هُوَ رَبِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ مَتَابٌ ﴿٣٠﴾

And those who break their pledge with Allah after it has been made binding, and cut off the relations Allah has commanded to be joined, and make mischief in the earth - those are the ones for whom there is the curse, and for them there is the evil abode. [25]

Allah expands the provision for whom He wills and narrows it. And they are happy with the worldly life, and the worldly life, compared to the Hereafter, is nothing but a little enjoyment. [26]

And the disbelievers say, "Why is it that no sign has been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say, "Allah lets go astray whom He wills and gives guidance to the ones

who turn to Him, [27] the ones who believe and their hearts are peaceful with the remembrance of Allah. Listen, the hearts find peace only with the remembrance of Allah." [28]

Those who believe and do good deeds, for them there is the bliss and a good place to return. [29]

Thus We have sent you, amidst a community before which many communities have passed away, so that you may recite to them what We have revealed to you, and they disbelieve in Al-Raḥmān (the Most-Merciful Allah). Say, "He is my Lord. There is no god but He. In Him I place my trust, and to Him is my return." [30]

Commentary

At the beginning of the section, human beings were divided into two kinds - those who are obedient to Allah Ta'ālā and those who are disobedient to Him. Then, enumerated there were some attributes and signs of the obedient servants of Allah and mention was made of the best of rewards for them in the Hereafter.

Now, in the present verses, stated there are the attributes and signs, and punishments, of the other kind of people. One trait of character these disobedient and contumacious people have been reported to have is: الَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ (And those who break [their] pledge with Allah after it has been made binding). Included here is the pledge out of the pledges given to Allah concerning His unshared Lordship and Oneness by all spirits created by Him. The disbelievers and polytheists broke this pledge when they came into this world and consequently took to hundreds and thousands of lords and objects of worship all joined up with the pristine divinity of Allah Ta'ālā.

And also included here are all pledges faithfulness to which becomes binding on human beings as part of the great pledge of: لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ (There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah). The reason is that the Kalimah Ṭayyibah, that is: لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (Lā' Ilāha Illallāhu Muḥammadur Rasūlullāh ﷺ : There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah - Muhammad is the messenger of Allah) is, indeed, the symbol of a great pledge under which fall the obedience to all injunctions and rules of conduct taught by Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger, and it also covers the

pledge to abstain from things which have been prohibited. Therefore, when a human being deviates from any injunction made binding by Allah or deviates from the command given by His Messenger, he or she commits a breach of trust by breaking this pledge to have faith.

The second trait of these disobedient people has been identified as: وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ (and cut off relations Allah has commanded to be joined). Included here is the relationship human beings have with Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger, may peace be upon him, and the blessings of Allah. The cutting of this relationship simply means the contravention of their commands. And, of course, included here are connections based on relationships the maintenance of which and the fulfillment of whose rights has been stressed upon time and again in the Holy Qur'an.

Those who disobey Allah Ta'ālā would not hesitate in sundering even these relations and rights built around them - for instance, they would not fulfill the rights of their mother, father, brother, sister, neighbour, and others in that category while they are rights which must be fulfilled by all human beings as commanded by Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger.

The third trait of such people has been stated as: وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ (and make mischief on the earth). This third trait is actually the outcome of the first two, that is, they disregard pledges given, whether given to Allah or to His servants, just have no consideration of anyone's rights or relationships. It is obvious that such deeds of these people will cause pain and loss to others, even become the cause of mutual fighting and killing. This is the worst 'Fasād' or disorder or mischief they inflict on this earth.

After having described these three traits of the disobedient and contumacious people, the punishment identified for them is: أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ (those are the ones for whom there is the curse, and for them there is the evil abode). The word: لَعْنَةٌ (*al-la'nah*: translated here as 'curse') means to be removed far away from the mercy of Allah, and become deprived of it. And it goes without saying that being far removed from His mercy is the most punishing of all punishments and certainly the hardest of all hardships.

Injunctions and Rules of Guidance

Special injunctions and rules of guidance concerning many depart-

ments of human life appear in the verses 20 to 24. Either explicit or implied, they are as follows:

1. From: **الَّذِينَ يُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَنْفُسُونَ الْعَيْثَاقَ** (those who fulfill [their] pledge with Allah and do not break the covenant - 20) it stands established that abiding by a pledge given or contract made with someone is a binding obligation which must be fulfilled, and any contravention of which is *Ḥarām* (forbidden, unlawful) - whether that pledge be related to Allah and His Messenger, as the pledge of Faith and the pledge to maintain relationships with those created by Allah, or it may be a pledge related to any Muslim or *Kāfir*. Pledge-Breaking is *Ḥarām* under all conditions.

2. From: **وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ** (and those who maintain the relations Allah has commanded to be maintained - 21) we learn that Islam does not teach abandonment of relationships in some monastic manner. Instead of that, maintaining necessary relations and fulfilling their due rights has been made necessary in Islam. As for the rights of parents, children, wife, sisters, brothers and the rights of other relatives and neighbours, these have been made obligatory by Allah Ta'ālā on every human being. They cannot be ignored in favour of voluntary acts of worship, not even to devote time for some religious service needed by the community. This is not permissible. How could it become permissible to forget them and get busy doing other things?

As for maintaining the bonds of family relationships, taking care of them, and fulfilling their due rights, these have been stressed upon in many verses of the Holy Qur'ān.

In a Ḥadīth of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim based on a narration of Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: A person who hopes to have extended means of living and *barakah* in things done must maintain relations (*Ṣilatur-Raḥim*). It simply means that one should take care of those he is closely related with and help and support them within personal capability.

And Sayyidnā Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī رضي الله عنه says that a rustic Arab villager called upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ at his home and asked him: 'Just tell me what should I do to come closer to Paradise and stay away from Hell.' He said: 'Worship Allah. Take no partners with Him. Establish Ṣalāh. Give Zakāh. And maintain relations.' (Al-Baghawī)

According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: 'Ṣilatur-Raḥim' (maintaining relations) does not simply mean that you return the favour done by a relative, that is, if he has done a favour to you, you do a favour to him. Instead, real Ṣilatur-Raḥim (the ideal form of maintaining relations) is that even if your relative fails to maintain relations with you, yet you, on your part, only for the sake of Allah, maintain relations with him, and do favours to him.'

It was due to the importance of fulfilling the rights of relatives and maintaining relations with them that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Preserve your family trees through which you would preserve your family ties and you would be able to fulfill their rights.' Then he said: 'This rule of maintaining relations has its advantages. It generates mutual love, puts *barakah* in wealth which increases, and puts *barakah* in years of life too.' (Tirmidhī)

It appears in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Most commendable is the act of maintaining relations when a person maintains the same relations with the friends of his dead father, as they were during his lifetime.'

3. The statement: وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِعَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ (in order to seek the pleasure of their Lord - 22) makes us realize that the merits of Ṣabr (patience) which have appeared in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and which tell us that the patient person has the good fortune of having Allah Ta'ālā with him, and of His help and support, and that countless returns and rewards wait for him or her. But, all this happens only when one observes patience for the good pleasure of Allah Ta'ālā - otherwise, everyone reaches a point in time when, sooner or later, one gets to become reconciled to his or her lot.

As explained earlier, the real meaning of Ṣabr (translated here as 'to observe patience') is to control one's self and remain steadfast which can take different forms. First of all, one should observe patience, not become upset under the stress of hardship and pain, not become disappointed, rather keep Allah Ta'ālā in sight and keep hoping. Secondly, one should observe patience in carrying out acts of obedience to Allah in a way that one remains sure of staying on that track steadfastly, even if

the adherence to Divine injunctions appears to be hard on one's self. Thirdly, one should observe patience against what is evil and sinful - even if the desiring self demands that the road to evil be taken, but one should resist and refuse to take the road to evil because of the fear of Allah.

4. From: وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً (and spend from what We have given to them secretly and openly - 22), we learn that spending in the way of Allah secretly and openly is correct whichever way it is done. However, it is better that obligatory charities (*wājib ṣadaqāt*) such as Zakāh and Ṣadaqātul-Fiṭr etc., be paid openly so that other Muslim are also prompted to do the same. As for voluntary charities (*nafl ṣadaqāt*) which are not obligatory should be paid secretly so that one can stay safe from scruples of hypocrisy and pulls of recognition.

5. The statement: يَذْرَءُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ (and repel evil with good) tells us that getting rid of evil is certainly a rational and physical imperative, but evil for evil is not the method practiced in Islam. Instead, the teaching of Islam is: Repel evil with good. Whoever has inflicted injustice upon you, on your part you deal with him justly. Whoever has not fulfilled your due right, on your part you fulfill his right. Whoever releases his anger on you, on your part you respond to him with forbearance and tolerance. The inevitable result of this pattern of response would be that enemies would turn into friends and the wicked into the righteous before you.

Another sense of this sentence is that one should make amends for a sin by performing an act of obedience, that is, if you ever get to commit some sin, repent immediately and then get busy with the 'Ibādah of Allah Ta'ālā. This will cause your past sin to be forgiven.

As reported by Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: When a sin happens to have been committed by you, follow it up with a good deed. This will wash that sin off (narrated by Aḥmad with sound authority, Maḥzarī). The condition attached to this good deed is that one must first repent from the past sin and then do the good deed.

Said in the next verse (23) is: جَنَّتُ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ It means that servants of Allah who are righteous and accepted will certainly have the honour of being in Jannah, and it will be in con-

sideration of them that their parents, wives and children will also share the honour with them. However, the condition is that these people should be righteous, that is, believers and Muslims - not Kāfir, though not at par with such pious elder in their good deeds. But, because of the *barakah* of this pious elder, Allah Ta'ālā shall make these people reach the same station in Paradise which is the station of this pious elder as said in another verse: *الْحَقَنَابِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ* that is, 'We shall make the progeny of Our righteous servants be with them - 52:21'

This tells us that relationship with pious elders, whether of lineage, kinship or friendship, shall be of benefit in the Hereafter as well - of course, subject to the condition of *'Imān* (Faith).

6. From verse 24: *سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعَمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ* (Peace be upon you for the patience you observed. So, good is the ultimate abode) we find out that the salvation of the Hereafter and the high ranks of the Paradise are all the outcome of man's patient handling of the trials of life in this mortal world where he keeps insisting on fulfilling all rights of Allah Ta'ālā and His servants due on him or her and keeps compelling one's desiring self to abstain from acting disobediently to Him.

Finally, if we consider the statement in verse 25, that is: *أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ* (those are the ones for whom there is the curse, and for them there is the evil abode), we would recall that verses previous to it told us about the reward of His obedient servants - that their home will be in Paradise, angels would greet them with Salām, and tell them that the eternal blessings of Paradise are the direct result of their patience, fortitude and obedience. Similarly, in the verse cited above, announced is the end of the disobedient and the contumacious - that they are under the curse of Allah, that is, they are far removed from His mercy and that they have waiting for them an evil abode in Hell. This helps us realize that the breaking of pledges given and the severance of the bonds of kinship is the cause of Divine curse and consignment to Hell. May Allah keep all of us protected from such a fate.

Verses 31 - 33

وَلَوْ أَنَّ قُرَآنًا سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ أَوْ قُطِعَتْ بِهِ الْأَرْضُ أَوْ كُتِبَ بِهِ

الْمَوْتَى ۖ بَلْ لِلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ جَمِيعًا ۖ أَفَلَمْ يَأْتِ الْذِّينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ لَوْ يَشَاءُ
 اللَّهُ لَهَدَى النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا ۖ وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا تُصِيبُهُمْ بِمَا
 صَنَعُوا قَارِعَةٌ أَوْ تَحُلُّ قَرِيبًا مِّنْ دَارِهِمْ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ وَعْدُ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
 لَا يَخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَلَقَدْ اسْتَهْزَىٰ بِرُسُلٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَامْلَيْتَ
 لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهُمْ ۖ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ ﴿٣٢﴾ أَفَمَن هُوَ قَائِمٌ
 عَلَىٰ كُلِّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ ۖ وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ ۖ قُلْ سَمُّوهُمْ ۖ أَمْ
 تُنَبِّئُونَهُ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ بِظَاهِرٍ مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ ۖ بَلْ زَيْنَ لِلَّذِينَ
 كَفَرُوا مَكْرُهُمْ وَصُدُّوا عَنِ السَّبِيلِ ۖ وَمَن يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِن هَادٍ

﴿٣٣﴾

And even if there were a Qur'an wherewith the mountains could be moved, or the earth could be split apart, or wherewith the dead are spoken to, (they would not believe). But all the judgements are of Allah. Are the believers not aware that, if Allah wills, He would bring all the people to the right path? And the disbelievers shall keep receiving disaster for what they did, or it will visit somewhere close to their homes, until Allah's promise comes to pass. Surely, Allah does not back out on His promise. [31]

And Messengers have been mocked at before you, so I let the disbelievers go on for a while. Then I seized them. So, how was My punishment? [32]

Is then He, who is watchful over everyone and over whatever he earns (not present?) while they have made partners with Allah. Say, "Give their names. Is it that you are informing Him of something on earth He does not know, or of just empty words?" But, their ill- designs have been made alluring for the disbelievers, and they have been barred from the Path. And the one whom Allah deprives of guidance, for him there is no one to guide. [33]

Commentary

Clear proofs of Islām being the true religion and the Holy Prophet ﷺ

being the true prophet were there before the disbelievers of Makkah. They could see the signs from every department of his life, and from his many miracles, openly and comprehensively. The chief of the disbelievers, Abū Jahl had already declared that they stood in competition with the tribe of Banū Hāshim. How could they ever accept their superiority in a matter so crucial - that the Messenger of Allah had to rise from among them? So, let them say what they have to say, and let them show whatever signs they must show. As for them, they were not going to believe in him under any condition whatsoever. Therefore, bent on confrontation, they lost no opportunity to display their obstinacy asking absurd questions and making unreasonable demands. The present verses too have been revealed in response to a question asked by Abū Jahl and his accomplices.

According to Tafsīr al-Baghawī, once the disbelievers of Makkah, Abū Jahl ibn Hishām and 'Abdullāh ibn Umaiyyah among them, came to the Baytullah and sat down on its rear side. They sent the later to the Holy Prophet ﷺ with some demands. He said to him: If you want that your people and all of us accept you as a Messenger of Allah and follow you, then we have some demands. Fulfill them through your Qur'ān and we all shall embrace Islam.

One of the demands was that the land of Makkah was too short on space. What they have is a long stretch of land surrounded by mountains on all sides in which there is no room for cultivation and farming and no place to grow fruits or provide other needs. So, they asked him: You move these mountains farther away through your miracle so that the land area of Makkah becomes more extensive. Reminding him of his own saying they said that mountains were subjugated for Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام - when he recited the praises of Allah, the mountains did the same with him. And they reminded him again that he was no less a person than Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام in the sight of Allah.

The second demand they put forward was that the way Allah Ta'ālā had subjugated the wind for Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام - as he himself had told them - and had thereby reduced great distances on the earth into brief spans, so, they demanded that he too should do the same for them so that their travels to Syria and Yaman become easy on them.

Their third demand was that the way Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام made the dead come alive, he too should do that for them. Since he was for them no less than him, let him bring their forefather, Quṣayy, back to life so that they could ask him whether or not this religion brought by the Arab prophet was true. (Maẓharī with reference to al-Baghawī and Ibn Abī Ḥatīm and Ibn Marduwayh)

The hostile demands mentioned in the verses cited above were answered in the following words:

وَلَوْ أَنَّ قُرْآنًا سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ أَوْ قُطِعَتْ بِهِ الْأَرْضُ أَوْ كُتِبَ بِهِ الْمَوْتَى ط بَلْ لَلَّهُ الْأَمْرُ
جَمِيعًا

And even if there were a Qur'ān wherewith mountains could be moved, or the earth could be split apart, or wherewith the dead are spoken to (they would not believe). But all the judgements are of Allah - 31.

Lexically, the expression: *سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ* refers to the moving of mountains from their place, and: *قُطِعَتْ بِهِ الْأَرْضُ* signifies the traversing of long distances in a short time, and: *كُتِبَ بِهِ الْمَوْتَى* denotes talking to the dead after they have been brought back to life. As for the principal clause of the conditional clause beginning with the word *لَوْ* (if), it stands understood under the necessity of the textual situation, that is: *لَمَّا آمَنُوا* (they would not believe). The nature of this complement is the same as specifically mentioned at another place in the Holy Qur'ān while dealing with a similar subject. There it was said: *وَلَوْ أَنَّا نَزَّلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ الْمَلِيكَةَ وَكَلَّمَهُمُ الْمَوْتَى وَحَشَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ قُبُلًا مَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا* (6:111).

It means that, even if these demands were to be met through the Qur'ān, as a miracle, they were still not going to believe because they have already seen such miracles before their present demands, miracles which are far more impressive than what they want now. The splitting of the moon in two at the hands of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is far more miraculous than mountains moving away from their place, or the subjugation of the wind. Similarly, the talking of inert pebbles in his blessed hands and their recitation of praises for Allah is certainly far greater a miracle than the talking of a dead person brought back to life. During the Night of the Ascent (al-Mi'rāj), the journey to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā (Jerusalem), and then onwards from there, the journey through the heavens, and

then the return back to Makkah in a very short span of time is indeed far more striking than the miraculous subjugation of the wind and the throne of Sulaymān عليه السلام. But these arrogant people, despite having seen all this with their own eyes, did not believe. And when they acted in that unreasonable manner, it is obvious that their demands tell on their intention which is no more than a device to gain time. They have to accept nothing and they have to do nothing. Since the objective behind these demands made by the disbelievers was to reach a stage when their demands will not be fulfilled whereupon they will have a good occasion to say that, *Ma'adh Allah*, these are things Allah Ta'ālā Himself has no control over. Or, may be the request made by the Holy Prophet ﷺ has no effect and that it is either not heard by Allah or is not accepted by Him - which gives the impression that he is no Messenger of Allah. After that, it was said: *بَلْ لِلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ جَمِيعًا* (But all the judgements are of Allah). It means that power, choice and control, all of it, belongs to Allah which strongly suggests that not fulfilling the demands made is not because they are beyond the power and control of Allah Ta'ālā. Instead, the truth of the matter is that He alone is the One who knows the considerations and expediencies which go into the working of this universe. It was in His ultimate wisdom that He did not consider it appropriate to fulfill these demands - because He knows the doggedness and ill-intention of the makers of the demands. He knows that, should all demands made by them were to be fulfilled, they would still not believe.

Now said in the third sentence of verse 31 was: *أَفَلَمْ يَأْتِسْ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ لَوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ لَهْدَى النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا* (Are the believers not aware that if Allah wills, He would bring all the people to the right Path?).

Commenting on this statement, Imām al-Baghawī has reported that the noble Ṣaḥābah, when they heard these demands of the disbelievers, started nursing the thought that it would be better if these demands were fulfilled for, by doing so, all Makkans will become Muslims and Islam itself would move to a position of greater strength. Thereupon, the present verse was revealed. It means: Is it that believing Muslims, despite seeing and knowing the habit of excuse-seeking and hostile argumentations practiced by the disbelievers, have not yet lost hope in their potential to enter the fold of faith? If not, why would they start indulging in such wishes and hopes while they also know that, had Allah Ta'ālā so

willed, He would have Himself given to all human beings such guidance as would have left for them no choice but to become Muslims. But, His wisdom did not stipulate that everyone should be compelled to enter the fold of Islām and 'Imān (faith). In fact, the very wisdom was to let everyone have his or her choice, and opt for Islām or Kufr (disbelief) on the basis of that personal choice.

Said in the fourth sentence of verse 31 was: وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا تُصِيبُهُمْ بِمَا صَنَعُوا قَارِعَةٌ أَوْ تَحُلُّ قَرِيبًا مِّن دَارِهِمْ (And the disbelievers shall keep receiving disaster for what they did, or it will visit somewhere close to their homes). According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, the word: قَارِعَةٌ (*Qāri'ah*) means disaster, hardship or calamity. The sense of the verse is that the demands of these disbelievers were not acceded to as their ill-intention and doggedness were already known, that is, even if these demands were fulfilled, they would still not believe. In the sight of Allah, these people deserve nothing less than that disasters keep coming upon them in this mortal world as well, as it happened with the people of Makkah who were either hit by famine, or had the misfortune of being killed or caught during the Islamic battles of Badr and Uḥud, or had someone struck by lightening, or yet another became a victim of some calamity. Then, the statement: أَوْ تَحُلُّ قَرِيبًا مِّن دَارِهِمْ (or it will visit somewhere close to their homes) means that there will be times and occasions when the disaster will not hit them directly. Rather, it would come upon habitations close to them. The purpose would be to teach them a lesson and help them see their own evil end in the backdrop of a vicinity close by.

Verse 31 concludes with the statement: حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ وَعْدُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ (until Allah's promise comes to pass. Surely, Allah does not back out on His promise). It means that this cycle of disasters will continue until such time that the promise of Allah stands fulfilled, because the promise of Allah can never go unfulfilled. The promise referred to here is the promise of the conquest of Makkah. The sense is that different kinds of disasters will keep visiting these people until comes the time when Makkah al-Mukarramah will be finally conquered and all antagonists will stand subdued.

Before we part with the subject, let us go back to the statement: أَوْ تَحُلُّ قَرِيبًا مِّن دَارِهِمْ (or it will visit somewhere close to their homes - 31) which tells us that a disaster or calamity or punishment which visits the envi-

rons of a people has a concealed wise consideration of Allah Ta'ālā behind it. The message it delivers is that people living nearby should stand warned, learn from what happened to others and thereby correct their own doings. If taken seriously, what came as punishment for others could become a message of mercy for them. Otherwise, a day will come when they too will end up the way others did under their eyes.

Today, in our countries and in areas close to them, we keep hearing of different kinds of calamities hitting some community or locality almost every day. There are floods, cyclones, earthquakes or some other punishing disasters. According to this statement of the Qur'ān, these are not simply punishments meted out to such localities and communities, in fact they also serve as warnings to people living in surrounding areas. In old days, though awareness through the arts and sciences was not so spick and span, but people did have the fear of Allah in their hearts. If some disaster of this nature struck a place, the people who lived there and even those who lived in adjoining areas would get alarmed and frightened. In that state, they would turn to Allah Ta'ālā, repent from their sins, seek forgiveness from Him and take the giving of charity (*ṣa-daqaḥ*) at a time like this a source of salvation. And they could see with their own eyes that their difficulties stood removed very easily by doing so. Here we are in our day, so heedless that, even at a time so terrible, we seem to remember everything except Allah. When we do that, we become very much like the general run of non-Muslims - our eyes get fixed on material means only. Turning for help to the Causer of all Causes (the *Musabbibul-Asbāb*), even at such a crucial time, is something very few people have the *Tauḥīd* of doing. It is the direct result of this failing that the world always keeps experiencing unwelcome happenings of this nature.

Given below are some additional comments on the last sentence of verse 31, explained a little earlier. There it was said: حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ وَعْدُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ (until Allah's promise comes to pass. Surely, Allah does not back out on His promise).

As explained earlier, '*wa'dah*' or 'promise' at this place means the Conquest of Makkah, a promise Allah Ta'ālā had made to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The sense of the verse thus comes to be that Makkah will be conquered ultimately, and the disbelievers will be destroyed, subdued

and overpowered. Now before that comes to be, let them taste a little punishment as well for their crimes before that happens. And it is also possible that the expression: وَعَدُ اللَّهِ (the promise of Allah) refers to the day of Judgement at this place, a promise which has been made to all prophets and has been made since ever. So, on that day particularly, every disbelieving criminal will receive the full punishment for his or her doings.

The hostile questions asked by the disbelievers and the obstinacy shown by them as described in the event mentioned above posed the problem that these may cause pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, therefore, in the next verse, it was said to comfort him: وَلَقَدْ اسْتَهْزَأَ بِرَسُولٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَامْلَيْتُ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ (And Messengers have been mocked at before you, so I let the disbelievers go on for a while. Then I seized them. So, how was My punishment?) In other words, it means that conditions faced by the Holy Prophet ﷺ were not faced by him alone. There were prophets before him who had been facing similar conditions when their deniers were not seized immediately upon the commitment of their crime and they continued to make fun of the prophets. When they reached the limit, they were seized by Divine punishment and what a seizure that was which left none of them active enough to go on with their confrontation.

In the verse: أَفَمَن هُوَ قَائِمٌ عَلَى كُلِّ نَفْسٍ (Is then He, who is watchful over everyone ... 33), the ignorance and irrationality of the disbelievers has been exposed by saying that these people are certainly short on sense when they equate inert idols with His pure Being, a Being that watches everyone and is the ultimate reckoner of everyone's deeds. Then, it was said that the real reason behind their unreasonable attitude is that Shayṭān has made their very ignorance look good in their sight and, therefore, this they take to be 'achievement' and 'success.'

Verses 34 - 37

لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَشَقُّ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنَ
اللَّهِ مِنْ وَاقٍ ﴿٣٤﴾ مَثَلُ الْحَنَّةِ الَّتِي وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ ۖ تَجْرَىٰ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ ۖ أَكْلُهَا دَائِمٌ وَظِلُّهَا ۖ تِلْكَ عُقْبَى الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا ۖ وَعُقْبَىٰ

الْكَافِرِينَ النَّارُ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمُ الْكِتَابُ يَفْرَحُونَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ
وَمِنَ الْأَحْزَابِ مَنْ يُنْكِرُ بَعْضَهُ ۖ قُلْ إِنَّمَا أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ وَلَا
أُشْرِكَ بِهِ ۖ إِلَيْهِ أَدْعُوا وَإِلَيْهِ مَابِ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ حُكْمًا عَرَبِيًّا ۖ
وَلَيْنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ لَا مَالَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ
وَلِيٍّ وَلَا وَاقٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

For them there is punishment in the worldly life and, indeed, the punishment of the Hereafter is even harder, and for them there is none to save them from Allah. [34]

Here is the description of the Paradise promised to the God-fearing: underneath it the rivers flow; its food is everlasting and (so is) its shade. This is the ultimate abode of the God-fearing while the ultimate abode of the disbeliever is Fire. [35]

And those We have given the Book are happy with what has been sent down to you. And among the groups there are those who deny some of it. Say, "I am commanded only to worship Allah and not to ascribe partners to Him. To Him I call and to Him is my return." [36]

And thus We have sent it down, being a command in Arabic. And if you follow their desires, after the knowledge that has come to you, there shall be no friend for you against Allah, nor a saviour. [37]

Verses 38 - 43

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّن قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَذُرِّيَّةً ۖ وَمَا كَانَ
لِرَسُولٍ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۖ لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ يَمْحُوا
اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُثَبِّتُ عَزَّ وَعِندَهُ ۖ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَإِنْ مَا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ
الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ تَوَفَّيْنَاكَ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلْغُ وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ ﴿٤٠﴾
أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا ۖ وَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ لَا
مُعَقَّبَ لِحُكْمِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٤١﴾ وَقَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ

قَبْلِهِمْ فَلِلَّهِ الْمَكْرُ جَمِيعًا ۖ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ۖ وَسَيَعْلَمُ
 الْكُفْرُ لِمَنْ عُقِبِيَ الدَّارَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَسْتَ مُرْسَلًا ۖ
 قُلْ كَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْكِتَابِ ﴿٤٣﴾ ع

And We have sent messengers before you, and gave them wives and children. And it is not for a messenger to bring a sign without the will of Allah. For every time there is something prescribed. [38] Allah wipes off what He wills and affirms (what He wills). And with Him is the Mother Book. [39]

And if We show you some of what We promise them, or We take you back to Us (you are not accountable), you are only to convey the message and We are to reckon. [40]

Have they not seen that We are coming to the land narrowing it down from all its sides? And Allah judges; there is none to repel His judgement. And He is swift at reckoning. [41]

And those before them did devise plans, but Allah's are the plans altogether. He knows what every soul earns. And the disbelievers will soon know for whom is the ultimate abode. [42]

And the disbelievers say, "You are not a messenger." Say, "Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and whoever with whom is the knowledge of the Book." [43]

Commentary

The common thinking of disbelievers and polytheists about a prophet and messenger was that he should be from a species other than human, such as a creation like angels so that their supremacy over the general run of human beings becomes clearly pronounced. The Holy Qur'ān has refuted this false idea of theirs in many verses by saying that they had simply failed to realize the reality and wisdom behind the sending of prophets and messengers, therefore, they went about pursuing such ideas. The reason is that a messenger is sent by Allah Ta'ālā as a model in order that communities of human beings follow them and learn deeds and morals similar to theirs. And it is obvious that whoever is human can only follow a fellow human being. For him to follow someone who

does not belong to his species is impossible. For example, take an angel. He has no hunger or thirst or desires, neither does he sleep or get tired. Now, if human beings were commanded to follow them as a model, they would have more trouble on their hands than they could handle in terms of their capability. The same objection of the polytheists showed up here, specially so, because of the marriages of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. An answer to this was given in initial sentences of the first verse (38) by asking them: How can you consider a person who marries once, or more than once, and has a family and children, as not being fit or being contrary to the station of prophethood or messengership? What proof do you have for such an assertion? In fact, it has always been the blessed practice of Allah Ta'ālā that He makes His prophets masters of a household. Prophets who have passed earlier - and you too believe in the prophethood of some of them - had wives, and children. The idea that this way of life is something contrary to being a prophet or messenger of Allah, or against the norms of piety or sainthood, is plain ignorance.

As it appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: I too keep fast and I too break it (that is, it is not that I always keep fasting). And he said: I too sleep during nights and rise up too for prayers (that is, it is not that I do nothing but keep praying all night); and I eat meat too, and I marry too. Whoever finds this practice of mine objectionable, he is not a Muslim: وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ (And it is not for a messenger to bring a sign without the will of Allah - 38).

Out of the hostile questions the disbelievers and polytheists have always been asking the blessed prophets - and were asked of the Holy Prophet ﷺ too by the polytheists of his time - two are fairly common. The first question envisaged that the injunctions revealed in the Book of Allah should be in accordance with their wishes. For instance, this request of theirs appears in Sūrah Yūnus [10:15]: اِنَّكَ بِقُرْآنٍ غَيْرِ هَٰذَا اَوْ بَدِّلْهُ that is, 'bring to us a Qur'ān other than this (which does not prohibit the worship of our idols), or change it (that is, you yourself change the injunctions brought by it, replacing 'punishment' with 'mercy' and 'unlawful' with 'lawful').

Now take their second demand. Despite having seen open miracles of the blessed prophets, may peace be upon them, they still insisted that

ever new miracles be shown to them. 'If you show us this or that miracle, then', they would say, 'we may consider becoming Muslims.' The word: آيَة (āyah) used in this sentence of the Qur'ān (which lexically means 'signs') could be taken in both the two senses it has - because, in the terminology of the Qur'ān, the verses of the Qur'ān are also called Āyāt, and the same word means a miracle. Therefore, in their explanation of this 'verse', some commentators have, by taking this word in the sense of the verse of the Qur'ān, explained it by saying that no prophet has the authority or choice to introduce a verse on his own in his Book. And some others, by taking this word: آيَة: 'Āyah in the sense of a miracle, have held that it means that Allah has not given any messenger or prophet the authority or choice to show a miracle, when he chooses or as he chooses it to be. It is said in Tafsīr Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī that, based on the rule of 'umūm al-majāz, both meanings could be taken, and both explanations could be correct.

Given this analysis, the gist of the sense carried by the verse is that 'demanding Our prophet to change the verses of the Qur'ān is misplaced and wrong. We have not given such a right to any messenger.' Similar is the case with the demand that he shows to them a particular miracle as identified by them. This too is a proof of their being ignorant of the reality of prophethood, because it is not within the control of a prophet or messenger that he could go ahead on his own and show a miracle as they demand according to their whim.

In the last sentence of verse 38, it was said: لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ (For every time there is something prescribed). The word: أَجَل ('ajāl) is used in the sense of a time-frame for everything, and: كِتَاب (kitāb) here carries the sense of a verbal noun, that is, written or prescribed. The statement means that the time and quantum of everything stands prescribed with Allah Ta'ālā. He has prescribed in eternity that such and such person shall be born at such and such time, and shall live for so many days, what places he shall go to, what shall be his life work, and when and where he shall die.

Similarly, it is also prescribed that during such and such time what revelations and injunctions will be sent to such and such prophet, because the very process of the coming of injunctions as appropriate to every time and every people is required by reason and justice. And also pre-

scribed is that such and such miracle shall manifest itself at the hands of such and such prophet at such and such time.

Therefore, asking the Holy Prophet ﷺ to insert particular kinds of injunctions into the Qur'ān as proposed by them, or asking him to show a particular miracle on request is a hostile and wrongful demand, which is based on an absence of awareness of the reality of messengership and prophethood.

Said in the next verse (39) was: *يَمْحُوا اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُثَبِّتُ وَعِنْدَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ* : 'Allah wipes off what He wills and affirms (what He wills). And with Him is the Mother Book.' [The translation of: *أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ* (*umm-ul-kitāb*) as 'Mother Book' reflects a word for word replacement possible at this place which also exhudes its applied sense in some measure, though not as clearly as given in the Tafsīr immediately after] The literal meaning of 'Umm al-Kitāb' is 'The Original Book.' The reference here is to the 'Preserved Tablet' (al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ) in which there can be no change or alteration.

The sense of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā, in His most perfect power and wisdom, obliterates what He wills, and affirms what He wills. And after this obliteration and affirmation, whatever there is stays preserved with Allah Ta'ālā. No one has access to it, nor can there be any deletion and addition into it.

Leading authorities in Tafsīr, Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رحمه الله تعالى and Qatādah رحمه الله and others have declared that this verse too is related with the obliteration and affirmation of injunctions and religious codes, that is, with the problem of Naskh or abrogation. As for the sense of the verse, they say that in the Books which Allah Ta'ālā sends to different people through different messengers, and outlined in which are religious laws, obligations and duties, it is not necessary that all injunctions contained therein be eternal and last for ever. In fact, it is in fitness with conditions prevailing among peoples and the change in times that Allah, in His wisdom, abrogates or repeals whichever injunction He wills, and affirms and retains whichever He wills. Then, the original Book is preserved with Him after all. It is already written there that such and such injunction sent down for such and such people is for a particular period of time, or is based on particular conditions. When that term expires, or

those conditions change, this injunction will also change. In this original Book, that term and that appointed time stands recorded with full and authentic determination. Also entered there is the description of the injunction which will replace the one changed.

This eliminates the doubt that Divine injunctions should never be abrogated, because enforcing an injunction and then abrogating it indicates that the enforcer of the injunction did not have the correct perception of conditions, therefore, it was after having seen conditions that it had to be abrogated. And it is obvious that the majesty of Allah Ta'ālā is beyond the possibility that something be outside the realm of His knowledge. Since this stipulation tells us that the injunction which is abrogated exists in the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā beforehand, that is, the injunction has been promulgated only for a specified period of time and will be changed later. This is similar to what a physician does in our world of experience. He examines a patient, looks at the symptoms of what he is ailing from, then prescribes a medicine relevant to the current condition he is in. And he knows the effect the medicine is going to bring forth, and after which, the particular medicine would have to be changed and the patient would have to be given another medicine of another description. To sum up, it can now be said that, according to this Tafsīr, the phenomena of obliteration and affirmation (*maḥw* and *ithbāt*) means the abrogation (*naskh*) of injunctions, and its affirmation and continuity.

As based on the view of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, a group of leading commentators, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Wakī' and others, have reported another Tafsīr of this verse where the subject of the verse has been determined as concerning the decree of destiny. And the meaning of the verse has been explained by saying that, according to the explicit statements of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, the destinies of the creations of Allah, including the sustenance received by every person during his entire years of life and the comfort and distress faced along the line, and their respective magnitudes are written since 'azal even before the creation of His creatures. Then, at the time of the birth of a child, the angels too are asked to keep it committed to writing. And every year, in the Laylatul-Qadr (The Night of Power), a full roster of what is supposed to happen during the course of that year is handed over to the angels.

In short, the age of every created individual, his or her sustenance,

times of movement and periods of rest are all determined, and written. But, from this decree of destiny, Allah Ta'ālā wipes off or obliterates what He wills and affirms or retains what He wills. However, the statement: وَعِنْدَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ (And with Him is the Mother Book) means that the original Book, according to which, after the process of obliteration and affirmation, ultimate action shall be taken, is with Allah. In this, there can be no change or alteration.

This has been elaborated in many authentic Aḥādīth which tell us that there are some *a'māl* (deeds) which cause a person's age and sustenance to increase. Some make them decrease. It appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that maintaining relations which must be maintained (*ṣilah ar-raḥim*) becomes the cause of increase in one's age. A narration in the Musnad of Aḥmad reports that there are occasions when one commits some such sin as leads to his being deprived of sustenance, and by serving and obeying one's parents, years of life increase, and nothing except *du'ā'* (prayer) can avert what is Divinely destined.

What we find out from all these narrations is that the age, the sustenance and things like that which Allah Ta'ālā has written into someone's destiny can become more or less because of some deeds - and also because of *du'ā'* (prayer), *taqdīr* (destiny) can be changed.

This is the subject dealt with in this verse. It says that the change or alteration in age or sustenance or hardship or ease in life as written in the Book of Destiny which takes place because of some deed (*'amal*) or prayer (*du'ā'*) means that Book of Destiny which is in the hands of the angels, or in their knowledge. There are times when, some decisions of this type of destiny are contingent on some particular condition. When that condition is not found, that decision does not take effect. Then, this condition is sometimes in writing and in the knowledge of angels, but there are times when this is not written - but exists in the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā alone. When that decision changes, everyone is left wondering. A destiny of this nature is called 'conditional' or 'contingent' (*mu'allaq*) in which, as explicitly stated in this verse, the process of obliteration and assertion keeps operating. But, the last sentence of the verse: وَعِنْدَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ, that is, 'with Him is the original Book,' means that above this 'conditional destiny,' (*taqdīr mu'allaq*) there is the 'final and definite destiny' (*taqdīr mubram*) which is with Allah Ta'ālā written in the original Book.

And that is the exclusive domain of Divine knowledge. Written there are the decisions, injunctions and commands which issue forth as the final outcome after the conditions of deeds have been fulfilled or *du'ā'* has been answered. Therefore, that is totally free of obliteration and assertion and addition and deletion. (Ibn Kathīr)

In verse 40: *وَإِنْ مَا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ تَوَفَّيْنَاكَ* (And if We show you some of what We promise them, or We take you back to Us), it is to comfort and assure the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he has been given the good news that the promises Allah has made to him that Islām will have the final victory and disbelief and disbelievers will be disgraced shall come to pass definitely. But, he is told, 'you should not concern yourself as to when this victory will finally come.' May be, this happens within his life time, and it is also possible that it comes after his departure from this mortal world. 'For your peace of heart, even this much is enough that you are continuously witnessing that We are causing the lands of the disbelievers to keep being sliced off their sides,' that is, these sides pass on under Muslim control whereby the land occupied by them keeps reducing in area. This causes well-being for Muslims and a day will come when the final phase of their victory shall stand completed. The command is in the very hands of Allah Ta'ālā. There is no one who can avert this command. And He is the One swift at reckoning.

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūratu-Ra'd
Ends here